

**SJ34 Testimony
Joyce Silverthorne
April 1, 2009, Room 303, 3:00 p.m.
Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee**

I am Joyce Silverthorne, P-20 Policy Advisory to State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Denise Juneau, and I rise as support for SJ 34.

"A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY TO EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POVERTY AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IN MONTANA'S K-12 SCHOOLS AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT ADDRESS ANY BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT THAT MIGHT BE POSED BY POVERTY; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 62ND LEGISLATURE."

As Superintendent Juneau stated in her State of Education address the the 2009 Legislature, "Our public education system is also responsible to these future generations. We work to ensure every student receives a quality public education no matter their background, their heritage, their economic status, or geographic location."

In the handout you've been given, there is data that indicates the presence of an academic achievement gap between several groups of students.

- (1) students receiving free and reduced lunch and those not on free and reduced lunch as indicated on Criterion Reference Tests of reading, mathematics, and science;**
- (2) students by race and ethnicity as indicated on Criterion Reference Tests of reading, mathematics, and science; and**
- (3) high school dropout rates for the State of Montana over five years.**

The OPI folks in Measurement and Accountability and Indian Education Division prepared this data to provide what we know at this time about the relationship between achievement in school and the impact of socio-economic status of families.

As members in a global society, today's students live in a world where the gap between people with socio-economic resources and those without is becoming rapidly larger. We have enough data at this time to be alarmed, and not enough from multiple sources to formulate collaborative policy and statewide direction. This study is an opportunity for the P-20 educators of the state and the legislators to provide information and direction for the next legislative decision making.